

Attachment N - Playground Details

A high quality playground will afford each child using it the opportunity to choose activities appropriate for their age and for their individual interests. Play” is the “work” of children and the playground environment can support their development in the following ways: Physical – large body movements and fine motor skills (including eye-hand coordination, balance and spatial awareness); emotional – feelings and the expression of them; social – interactions with others; and, cognitive – problem-solving and intellectual skills. Active play is also an antidote to childhood obesity.

The play industry has broken equipment inventories into two approximate groups, two-to-five (preschool), and six-to-twelve (school age). Parallel play is thought to be the most typical pattern of the 2 – 5 year-olds. They begin by imitating eachother’s behavior and evolve into interacting, solving problems and making friends. Favorite activities include:

- Swings (balance, hand-eye coordination)
- Slides (balance, hand-eye coordination)
- Spring items (balance, hand-eye coordination and upper-body strength)
- Mobile elements (imaginative play)
- Climbing (balance, hand-eye coordination, overall strength and gross motor planning skills)
- Tactile elements, sand, water and manipulative play panels (fine-motor skills and imaginative play)
- Play houses, play corners, shelters and other types of meeting places (social play and language development)

School age is the time when interest in games with rules develops more and healthy sports habits begin. These children enjoy playing together in groups and become increasingly better at social interaction. Favorite activities for this group include:

- Spinning events (balance and coordination)
- Balance challenges
- Climbing Equipment (total body strength, coordination, agility and lateral movement)
- Asymmetric equipment (total body strength, flexibility, and development of proprioceptive skills from moving the body in new and unexpected ways through space)

All of these activities should be incorporated into a playground standard. Any and all playgrounds must also be accessible to children and caregivers with disabilities and must meet or exceed ADA requirements. Equipment manufacturers offer a variety of options to make equipment accessible that meet requirements of the law. Another challenge met by equipment manufacturers is compliance with safety guidelines. Important guidelines that must be satisfied are, at a minimum, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission’s (CPSC) *Handbook for Public Playground Safety*, and the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) *F-1487-98* and *F1292-99*

(guidelines for safe equipment and surfacing materials). Many equipment manufacturers are also certified by the International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA). This association provides third-party Product Certification services for U.S. public play equipment and surfacing materials. All equipment specified by the Department must meet ASTM and CPSC guidelines.